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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 000107

SIPDIS
STATE FOR AF/E, AF/PD, AND A/S CARSON

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SUBJECT: Somalia - Dadaab Youth Report No Active Recruiting, But Temptation

REF: 09 NAIROBI 1799

CLASSIFIED BY: Bob Patterson, Counselor for Somalia Affairs, State Department, Somalia Unit, Embassy Nairobi; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

Summary

¶1. (C) Youth at the Dadaab refugee camps, the majority of whom are of Somali origin, report that they have not witnessed active recruitment efforts by extremist elements from Somalia, but they have experienced significant temptation to cross the border and take money to fight. Several youth claimed to have acquaintances who had left the camps with the intent to fight in Somalia, with most citing economic opportunity as a motive. Continued U.S. efforts at public diplomacy outreach appear to be very welcome, and we will remain engaged with the refugees in Dadaab as much as possible. End summary.

No Active Recruitment,

But Temptation

¶2. (C) During a recent visit to the majority-Somali Dadaab refugee camps, Somali youth told Somalia Unit officers that they had not witnessed or experienced active recruitment efforts by extremist elements from Somalia, but that they had acquaintances who had independently traveled to Somalia to fight as a means of earning money. We have tracked anecdotal evidence of recruitment from extremists (reftel) and remain concerned about the possibility of idle youth being drawn into fighting in Somalia, less than fifty miles away from the camps. During a meeting with youth in Dadaab's Dagahaley camp, we were told that youth are encouraged by "fake sheikhs" in the name of a "fake religion" to go fight in Somalia, with a payment of USD 100 per month. The youths claimed to have had peers who traveled to Somalia with the intention of fighting. They claimed their peers had not returned from Somalia.

13. (C) Without prompting, the youths brought up the case of an ethnic Somali who traveled from the U.S. to take part in a suicide bombing. (Note: The youths were presumably referring to the AmCit who undertook a suicide bombing in Somaliland in October 2008, though we have tracked reports of other AmCits who have carried out suicide bombings in Somalia. End note.) The refugee youths, as an illustration of what might tempt a young person to engage in extremism, noted that the bomber was born in the United States to a resettled refugee, and he himself had never experienced the dire conditions that our interlocutors were enduring.

Grateful for U.S.

Outreach Efforts

14. (C) These anecdotes highlight the need for sustained public diplomacy programming in the camps. During this visit, we received thanks from many of the youth who had benefitted from the soccer uniforms that we delivered in November 2009. We also saw a performance by a drama group that we equipped with musical instruments, costumes, and a sound system. We heard from aid

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workers at the camp that the gear we provided has enabled the group to reach a wider audience with a more professional presentation of their anti-extremism messages. Some of our interlocutors recalled fondly the Iowa Writer's Program that we facilitated in the summer of 2009. While these activities may appear to be small efforts in the midst of a hugely needy population, we are convinced that our public diplomacy activity in the camps is a vital means for reaching a disaffected and high-risk population. We will continue developing our outreach as conditions and resources permit.
RANNEBERGER